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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General, in Geneva, congratulates United States and Russian Federation on successful docking of Space Shuttle with Mir Space Station.

* UNPROFOR condemns continued shelling of civilians as act of barbarity after another rocket-bomb hits Sarajevo; French peace-keeper dies after vehicle strikes mine.

* Croatia accuses Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of violating Security Council resolution 988 by transferring troops across Bosnian border and into Serb-occupied Croatian territory.

* UNHCR appeals for $44 million to assist voluntary repatriation of 300,000 Angolan refugees over next 30 months.

* Special Representative for Haiti says despite shortcomings, Sunday's elections were major step forward in democratization of country.

* Administrative and Budgetary Committee welcomes progress made in reform of United Nations procurement, and Secretary-General's intention to report on matter to General Assembly.

* United Nations to host one-day international symposium on mental retardation, in conjunction with launching of 1995 Special Olympics.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today congratulated the United States and the Russian Federation on the occasion of the successful docking of the Space Shuttle Atlantis with the Mir Space Station. The space race, which had begun with attempts to attain military and technological dominance, had been transformed by that peaceful cooperative venture, he said.

The signing of the United Nations Charter fifty years ago this week ushered in a new age of international cooperation, he continued. Today, a new era of cooperation in outer space was dawning. The docking was a major step towards the establishment of an international space station. The Organization was committed to the promotion of cooperation in outer space and ensuring that all humanity reaped the benefits offered by space exploration.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

Today was the first full day of the Secretary-General's official visit to Switzerland. He had a "very positive and constructive" meeting in Geneva with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. They discussed the situation in the former Yugoslavia, cooperation between the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Independent States in Georgia, developments in Tajikistan, and the problem between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) today condemned the continued shelling of civilians in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an act of barbarity, after another improvised rocket-bomb hit Sarajevo. The missile landed near the television building, but caused no damage or injuries. Using a radar trace, UNPROFOR estimated that it had been fired from Serb-controlled territory six of seven kilometres west of the city.

Meanwhile, a French peace-keeper was killed when his armoured personnel carrier struck a mine while turning at a Bosnian Serb checkpoint in the Butmir area. Last night, a Russian convoy was directly targeted by Bosnian Government forces in the hills south of Sarajevo. Several vehicles were damaged by rifle and machine-gun fire, but there were no injuries.

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Croatia has accused the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) of violating Security Council resolution 988 (1995). In letters to the Council and the Secretary-General yesterday, the Croatian Government alleged that the border between the Federal Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina had been breached by the "Army of Yugoslavia". It said that Army had transferred troops and heavy weapons over the border, across territory controlled by the Bosnian Serbs, and then into the occupied territories of Croatia.

Croatia asked the Security Council to urgently consider and condemn recent acts of interference by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) in its internal affairs. "The condoning of this serious border violation and silence about Belgrade's intervention in Croatia would be a very serious setback for the situation in the occupied territories of Croatia and for the peace process in the region in general", it said.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today appealed for $44 million for the voluntary repatriation of 300,000 Angolan refugees over the next 30 months. Some 200,00 of the refugees are in Zaire, 96,000 are in Zambia, 12,000 are in the Congo, and 1,000 are in Namibia. Another 15,000 are scattered in 32 other countries.

(more)

Some 5,000 refugees have returned spontaneously to Angola since the signing of a peace accord last November. The accord ended 20 years of civil war that left an estimated 600,000 people dead and another three million displaced internally.

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Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi today visited Haiti's largest ballot-counting centre in Port-au-Prince, according to a United Nations spokesman. He was accompanied by the Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) and the Civilian Police Commissioner.

Mr. Brahimi said that despite shortcomings and some incidents of violence, Sunday's elections meant Haiti would have a popularly elected parliament, mayors and other local officials. He described the electoral process as a major step forward in the democratization of the country.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) has welcomed the progress made in implementing procurement reform in the United Nations Secretariat. In a decision approved yesterday, it also welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to submit a report on the matter to the General Assembly at its next session.

The Russian representative expressed support for the Secretariat's efforts to alleviate the shortage of procurement staff. The representative of India supported the training of procurement staff and their rotation between the field and Headquarters.

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The United Nations will host a one-day international symposium on mental retardation tomorrow, a spokesman for the Organization announced today. The symposium is being held in conjunction with the launching of the 1995 Special Olympics in New Haven, Connecticut, on Saturday. Lowell Weicker, former governor of Connecticut and chairman of the Special Olympics Committee, and Senator Edward Kennedy will be the guest speakers.

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